

Appendix 1

OMVCS Fund 2018-23 Case Studies

Note: these case studies include names that have been changed to protect individuals' identities. These have been written and kindly provided to Manchester City Council by the VCSE organisations named in each case study.

Manchester Carers' Forum

Jay has a strong desire to help others within their caring roles. He has been a carer for his mum for several years, and is keen to gain knowledge and information that will help support himself to care for his mum.

Jay began caring for his mum when he was in the process of studying for a masters degree many years ago. His caring role not only involves practical support, and problem solving how to get to appointments, but a lot of emotional support in terms of giving his mum confidence to do things and managing mood swings. There are lots of appointments that need to be attended, dealing with health professionals, and liaising with social services. It's a full-time job (and some) in itself which has meant that Jay has been unable to take up paid work. Jay always intended to carry on with his MSc but as his mum's health worsened, this has not been able to happen to date. He has, however, pursued an active interest in his creative talents which have given him an outlet.

He was directed into support from Manchester Carers Forum via a social worker in 2016 and has subsequently attended our Christmas meals. He was unable to attend a regular Carers Support Group in part due to location – although near to him it was not one that he could reach easily by public transport within the time he had available due to his caring role.

It wasn't until the pandemic hit that Jay really started to engage more with Manchester Carers Forum. He was enabled to do this as we moved our Support Groups from out in the community to online zoom meetings. It was somewhat of a pilot to begin with, and Jay took up the challenge to join us! His thoughts on the value of the meetings are as follows:

"Prior to the pandemic I didn't have regular contact with the people from Manchester Carers Forum, or with other Carers. I like to keep myself updated through emails, however, it wasn't until Manchester Carers Forum started to do the Zoom meetings that I really started to engage on a more regular basis with other Carers, and to start to feel as though I were part of the 'Caring Community'.

What has been so transforming for me, is to hear other people's stories. It's made me realise I am not alone, and that others are struggling against similar difficulties. It's been a place I can share my experience frankly and honestly with others in a supportive environment, where people understand the frustrations that caring can bring, and can offer empathy, as well as practical advice and tips. The Carers Support meetings also involve guest speakers coming along, this can be helpful to learn about services, or to ask questions around what's changed and what's

available. This has been particularly helpful, as over the pandemic, it has been hard to get hold of services sometimes. Being able to ask someone directly from an organisation “what’s going on?” has been a real help. Sometimes I feel invisible as a carer, and it gets me down. There isn’t always someone there cheerleading me on, recognising me for both what I do in my caring role, or who I am outside of that. Having that fed back to me is so powerful; to be seen as a person, and not just a number within a system.”

Chorlton Good Neighbours

Older men’s worker Frank writes “I have been visiting and supporting Gladstone for the last 6 months. Gladstone lives in supported housing In Chorlton, is a double amputee, and has the spirit of a lion as he has adapted to his condition.

To aid his independence and mobility he was helped by the Afro Caribbean Care group to get an electric wheelchair and was supported by Chorlton Good Neighbours worker Phil to negotiate his first trips into Chorlton.

Phil walked with Gladstone as he negotiated the pavements and curbs working out the best route into Chorlton and now Gladstone can get to Chorlton on his own to pursue his favourite pastime of betting on the horses! When I told him that I had never been in a betting shop – Gladstone replied “What! – you’ve not lived man!”

I support Gladstone with his shopping, and we meet outside the Co-op – I get the trolley and the list he has prepared, and we go shopping! Gladstone picks all his own food and is very particular about what he gets and so we spend quite some time selecting what is right for him.

Gladstone loves cooking and has an extremely healthy diet including fish, avocados, fruit and – well streaky bacon may not be the best – but he likes it! Gladstone is a very generous man who always chats to the homeless guys outside Co-op and gives a bit of money to them. We meet back at his place and I unload his shopping, but Gladstone always insists on putting away the good, such is his independent way of living.

Phil visits and plays dominoes with Gladstone and by all accounts Phil loses more than he wins! Gladstone says he is very grateful to Chorlton Good Neighbours for all the support they give him as he sometimes admits that life is a struggle, but you just have to get on!

Coming from Jamaica as a young man – living in the USA for a spell and then moving here Gladstone has had to adapt to his surroundings and situations all the time and that resilience is so apparent with the way he deals with his disability and the issues that causes him.

His sister lives in Old Trafford and he had not seen her for over a year due to Covid – so Chorlton Good Neighbours facilitated the trip and it was an emotional greeting that will be happening again soon now that the restrictions are lifting. At 86 Gladstone is an inspiration to us all”

Justlife

MA found himself living in a chaotic, shared house upon leaving the Approved Premises he had been staying in since his release from prison. He suffers from PTSD, depression, anxiety and has a personality disorder; as well as having diabetes, tinnitus, and nerve damage due to a head injury he sustained in prison. The environment in the temporary shared house had a detrimental effect on his mental health and he turned to drugs and alcohol to cope. He was also self-harming and experiencing suicidal thoughts. Whilst in this accommodation he was referred to Justlife. M met with one of our Specialist Support Workers at the Justlife centre and he had the opportunity to share in a safe space the difficulties he was facing due to his mental and physical health needs, as well as his housing issues. He told us how isolated and hopeless he felt.

The Specialist Support Worker provided one-to-one support, working collaboratively with M to develop a support plan focusing on key areas that M wanted to address. Following this, referrals were sent to the Mental Health Team and Self-Help services to try and get access to psychological support for M. We also supported M to register with a GP and ensured he was able to collect his medication from the pharmacy; something he had been neglecting, by providing transport and reminders.

Finally, we also referred to Change, Grow, Live to access specialist drugs and alcohol support. However, the referrals to mental health services were unsuccessful: M was informed that his needs were too high to receive support from psychological wellbeing services in the community, but they also deemed his needs were not high enough to be accessing specialist psychiatric support. We had to advocate strongly on M's behalf for him to access mental health services. Eventually, M was offered a further assessment with the mental health team which led to a referral to a psychiatrist, and access to more in-hours support. We also referred M to a local Crisis Café service which functioned throughout the evenings and nights, to ensure M a safe place to access in times of need out-of-hours too.

Alongside this health-focused work, we worked with partners, leading to M being placed in a rented flat where he has his own private space. During this time, we connected M with services to access furniture, energy advice, and benefits support, all to help the transition from living in the shared house to independent living. This, and the other support provided, has meant M is now in a much better mental space. This allowed M the opportunity to consider other areas of his life he wanted to develop. He decided he wanted meaningful activities to fill his time and to start to build a support network. We referred M to The Mustard Tree and Back on Track. M has signed up to English classes and cooking courses at Back on Track and has recently joined the gym to increase his fitness and general wellbeing.

M now talks about his hopes for the future, which include going on holiday and losing weight, something that would have been impossible for him to do at the beginning of our support. We are now reducing our support for M, who continues to sustain his tenancy and access support services, including mental health services. M told us: "Justlife is the most positive and constructive support I have ever had".

Manchester Action on Street Health (MASH)

Valerie, a woman previously known to MASH, contacted us via another agency. She was fleeing exploitation and had left her accommodation. This left her homeless and in need of housing support as well as safeguarding.

The MASH worker contacted her housing provider to liaise with them regarding next steps for the existing tenancy and to make them aware of situation regarding the exploitation. A homelessness assessment was provided by Manchester City Council.

Due to the possible further implications of her disclosing exploitation, contact was made with the police's Modern Slavery team, with Valerie's consent. Her mental health deteriorated during this time and a referral to Greater Manchester mental health was submitted by the MASH worker.

Following Valerie's housing assessment she is now in temporary accommodation in Manchester. MASH provided food parcels and made food bank referrals during her stay in temporary accommodation to ensure she could maintain access to food throughout. Valerie has now been allocated a mental health worker who will be completing a mental health assessment shortly. The MASH worker is supporting Valerie to reach a point with her mental health where she is able to discuss the exploitation she has experienced with the police's Modern Slavery unit.

This case study is an example of the benefits of having strong links with the housing team at Manchester City Council and the Modern Slavery Unit, to ensure that women can be appropriately housed in a timely manner and that high risk safeguarding concerns are escalated quickly to the appropriate level.

Back on Track

Michael

Having been let go from his previous job as a support worker, Michael came to Back on Track in May 2021. The loss of his job had hit him hard and his mental health really suffered. He had a history of depression and anxiety which had been under control whilst he was in work. Michael lived alone and was five years free of drugs and drink. He was terrified that he might relapse having gone from working every day of the week to having nothing to do in a really short period of time. Michael had started to withdraw from people and became very depressed and anxious.

Michael was clear that he needed to start doing something to keep himself busy to support his mental health and to help maintain his sobriety. He knew that getting back into work was the way to do this but also couldn't see any way forward and, given the circumstances surrounding his dismissal, he was convinced that he would never get another job.

He joined the Work Club in June and continued to attend for a term having attended the 'This Time Next Year' sessions previously.

We helped him look at the circumstance around losing his last job in a different way: in a way that made him realise that there were lots of options still available to him. Michael was already on a decline and it was really clear that he needed to be kept busy and the job would then follow. We helped him work on his CV and put him in touch with various organisations that we have good working relationships with. We supported him to make volunteer applications to various organisations and within 2 or 3 weeks he was offered 3 volunteering roles. The one he accepted was with a local charity supporting people being released from custody, the director of which had himself been a previous learner in our Work Club. He started volunteering with them and within a couple of months they offered him part time paid work which became full time permanent work in October.

Michael is now doing really well. He has kept in touch and is due to come back into the Work Club to talk to current learners who may be feeling the way he was when he first came to the sessions, and to talk about his own journey and what is possible. His feedback was that without the Work Club he would have stayed hidden away in his flat and probably be battling through another relapse.

Amy

Amy really struggled with her mental health as a result of being bullied at school. She had really low confidence and, although she had worked in the past, her anxiety had meant that she had to leave those roles.

Amy was referred to Back on Track by her mental health support team. Amy lived with her partner who was in full time work, and as a result, she wasn't eligible to make a claim for benefits. Getting into work was a priority for Amy but her confidence was low, nor did she know where to start or what job she wanted. In the past, she had taken any job that had been offered but it had never worked out.

We worked with Amy around identifying her transferable skills and the types of roles that these lent themselves to. Highlighting her skills and all the things she had to offer really helped Amy's confidence which meant that we were then able to support her to make plans and identify the next steps forward. We supported her to broaden her search for work and be focused on the areas that she was best suited to. Amy was able to produce different CVs for different applications over several weeks and was independently able to identify suitable roles and make applications for them, many of which resulted in interviews. This really improved Amy's confidence and made her feel like she was making decisions for herself.

Amy has now been offered a job with The Royal Mail in their sorting office and is due to start her induction this week. We have supported Amy with travel arrangements and general planning to be ready to start work. She tells me that she is feeling excited about this next step. This is a role that she particularly wanted, unlike other jobs in the past. We will continue to support in this role for as long as it is necessary as part of our in work support offer.

Amy says that coming to Back on Track allowed her to be focused and to develop the tools and knowledge she needed to properly prepare for and secure the right job. She still has mental health support but feels much more in control of things now and her confidence is better than it has been for a very long time.